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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAR ES SALAAM 001110

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#) [TZ](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR: DR. SALIM SALIM BRIEFS DCM ON ARUSHA
CONFERENCE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission D. Purnell Delly for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the AU Special Envoy to the Darfur peace process, told us shortly after arriving from Arusha that the August 4 to 6 conference had "exceeded expectations." While Abdul Wahid stayed in Paris, nearly all other factions had attended: the SFDA, JEM, SLA/Unity, SLA/A, SLM (Khamis Abdallah), and NMRD. Field commanders from JEM and SLA were also present as well as representatives from Libya, Chad, Eritrea and Egypt. According to Dr. Salim the single overarching objective of the Arusha meeting was accomplished--to have the rebel groups sit in the same room and agree on a common platform for negotiations with the Government of Sudan (GOS). They indicated a willingness to cease hostilities but only if all other parties to the conflict did the same. Salim said that he and UN Envoy Jan Eliasson are optimistic that negotiations between the rebels and the GOS could begin as early as late October, provided a venue for the talks could be agreed on. End Summary.

12. (C) While the August 4 to 6 conference in Arusha began nearly 12 hours behind schedule, by the time they commenced, nearly all groups were represented with the exception of Abdul Wahid in Paris and a few splinter factions. Eight field commanders attended, two of whom are close to Wahid and who attempted throughout the three day meeting to persuade Wahid to join. Salim said all faction representatives agreed to sit in the same room and discuss a common platform to prepare for future negotiations, working several evenings until after 2 a.m. By the last day Salim and Eliasson were given a copy of the common position and told that the rebel groups were ready to negotiate with Khartoum and also to cease hostilities until the negotiations began, provided all parties to the conflict did the same.

13. (C) Representatives of the seven factions asked for copies of both the Abuja Declaration of Principles (DOP) and the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) before the discussions began. Dr. Salim said he was surprised yet heartened that about 70

percent of the key elements of the DPA were reflected in the final common position reached by the end of the conference.

¶4. (C) Salim underlined his pleasure that the factions found a unified position, adding: "It is a demanding list, but at least they were in agreement." The participants were also willing to help persuade those rebel groups still "out," such as Abdul Wahid, to buy into the common position in advance of negotiations. Salim confided that although setting this common agenda was a critical hurdle, other challenges lie ahead such as selection of a rebel representative to lead negotiations and agreement on a site for future talks.

¶5. (C) In Salim's view, Kenya would most probably be acceptable for the Sudanese government, and perhaps less so for some of the rebels. Entebbe, Uganda has been ruled out due to past history between Khartoum and Kampala. South Africa has offered a venue, but the distance from Darfur presents a problem (Note: Salim noted wryly that the rebels rejected SA because their Thuraya's wouldn't connect to Darfur from there.) As with this Arusha forum, the AU has to negotiate permission from the GOS for the rebel leaders to leave Sudan, then provides AU/UN transport both ways. Thus a site closer to Sudan is preferable; for the AU/UN mediators the essentials are that the site is neutral and has a reliable communications system.

¶6. (C) Dr. Salim mentioned that the regional actors, Chad, Libya, Eritrea and Egypt, consistently give lip service to a desire to cooperate with the AU/EU effort. Yet both he and Elliason are aware that several countries have their own agenda and may be trying to wield influence behind the scenes.

¶7. (C) Salim expressed his frustration that Abdul Wahid's statements from Paris are creating tensions and divisions rather than supporting the commendable efforts of the rebel leaders that Salim saw working so hard in Arusha to forge a common negotiating position. Salim told the DCM he plans to suggest to the French Ambassador in Dar es Salaam that France needs to let Abdul Wahid know he cannot use Paris as a base to destabilize or undermine the serious efforts that are now in motion. Salim clarified he would not suggest that the French government expel Abdul Wahid, but rather let him know his public and private remarks are welcome only if they support movement toward a solution of the Darfur crisis.

¶8. (C) Salim explained that the SPLM Secretary General had attempted to organize consultations with the rebel leaders immediately following the Arusha conference. Since all the leaders and field commanders were already in one place, Salava Kiir had invited them to meet him in Rumbek before returning to Darfur. The purpose of this meeting would be to strategize how to get Abdul Wahid actively involved in the negotiating process. (Comment: Salim subsequently called us and said a flight had been arranged to Juba for these consultations. End comment).

¶9. (C) Salim admitted to the DCM that the task he took on several years ago to bring all parties to Abuja in order to reach agreement appears to be a road without end. "But what keeps me going is that I have seen the suffering of the people of Darfur first hand, the IDP's, the refugees, the women who have been raped, and I am motivated to keep trying." Dr. Salim said that Jan Elliason had left Arusha directly for Khartoum for consultations with the GOS. Salim will visit Khartoum August 13, then travel to Darfur the following week.

RETZER